IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-26 (Canceled).

Claim 27 (New) A video decoding method of decoding motion compensated prediction inter-frame encoded data by referring to a plurality of reference frames for each macroblock, comprising:

receiving encoded motion vector data, encoded predictive mode information, and an encoded prediction error signal;

selecting, in accordance with the motion vector data and the predictive mode information, one from (a) generation of a predictive macroblock from a specific reference frame of the plurality of reference frames, (b) generation of a plurality of macroblocks from the plurality of reference frames so as to generate an average value of the plurality of reference frames as a predictive macroblock, or (c) generation of a predictive macroblock by a linear extrapolation prediction or linear interpolation prediction; and

generating a decoded frame by adding the generated predictive macroblock and the predictive error signal,

wherein the received predictive mode information includes a first flag indicating a single prediction using the specific reference frame or a composite prediction using a plurality of reference frames and a second flag indicating whether the composite prediction is a prediction based on an average value of a plurality of reference macroblocks or the linear extrapolation prediction or linear interpolation prediction, the second flag being received as header data of an encoded frame or part of header data of a plurality of encoded frames.

Claim 28 (New) A video decoding method of decoding motion compensated prediction inter-frame encoded data by referring to a plurality of reference frames for each macroblock, comprising:

an input unit configured to receive encoded motion vector data, encoded predictive mode information, and an encoded prediction error signal;

a selector to select, in accordance with the motion vector data and the predictive mode information, one from (a) generation of a predictive macroblock from a specific reference frame of the plurality of reference frames, (b) generation of a plurality of macroblocks from the plurality of reference frames so as to generate an average value of the plurality of reference frames as a predictive macroblock, or (c) generation of a predictive macroblock by a linear extrapolation prediction or linear interpolation prediction; and

a generator to generate a decoded frame by adding the generated predictive macroblock and the predictive error signal,

wherein the received predictive mode information includes a first flag indicating a single prediction using the specific reference frame or a composite prediction using a plurality of reference frames and a second flag indicating whether the composite prediction is a prediction based on an average value of a plurality of reference macroblocks or the linear extrapolation prediction or linear interpolation prediction, the second flag being received as header data of an encoded frame or part of header data of a plurality of encoded frames.